

As we enter the 21st century, the keys to opportunity for every American are education and training. That's another one of our jobs here in Washington, to give people the tools they need to make the most of their own lives. That's why we reformed the student loan system, eliminating middlemen and actually cutting the cost to the taxpayers and making college loans more affordable for all kinds of middle class students all across this country, lower costs and easier to pay back. We also expanded the Head Start program by 30,000 children and made it apply to younger kids. We're helping young people who don't choose college learn the skills they need to get and keep high-paying jobs.

In the last Congress many Republicans supported these things as well as Democrats. But in this Congress, some Republicans want to limit the reach of our college loans so over half the students in the country can't get them. They want to slow down or stop or reverse a lot of these other educational gains.

But creating opportunity for people who take responsibility for themselves is exactly what the Government should be doing at this time in our history. Some of these Republicans see education as just another place to cut and gut. I want to cut Government. I have cut Government. There are already more than 100,000 fewer people working here than there were the day I became President. But I don't want to do it at the expense of our children's skills and education in our future.

Finally, this week our administration opposed Republican efforts in the House of Representatives to force the Government to spend billions on a Star Wars-type defense system, diverting those resources from high priority national security areas and threatening our Anti-ballistic Missile Treaty. I was gratified that the Democrats and some Republicans who joined them had the courage to defeat this unacceptable and unconstitutional infringement on the President's authority. America's security must never be about Republicans and Democrats, about who happens to be President and who happens to control Congress. Our national security should never be a partisan issue. And I will not allow Congress to jeopardize that security by making it one. After all, our job,

no matter what our party is, is to work together, to move America forward, and to preserve the American dream for all Americans in the new global economy.

That's why I proposed the middle class bill of rights to cut taxes for ordinary people to help them invest in their families and in their education, why I want to raise the minimum wage, so people who will take the responsibility to work full-time and stay away from welfare can earn a decent living for themselves and their children while they're doing it.

I will fight for every idea, every proposal, every piece of legislation that strengthens the American dream. And I'll keep doing everything in my power to fight against anything that weakens it.

Thanks for listening.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:06 a.m. from the Oval Office at the White House.

**Remarks Congratulating the 1994
National Basketball Association
Champion Houston Rockets and an
Exchange With Reporters
February 18, 1995**

The President. Good morning, everyone. I am delighted to be here with the Houston Rockets; along with NBA Commissioner David Stern; Congresswoman Sheila Jackson-Lee; the owner of the Rockets, Leslie Alexander; and of course, Rudy Tomjanovich, the head coach.

I want to congratulate the Rockets formally on their championship last year. We've been trying to find a time for them to come to the White House and make their official visit for some time, and as you know, they played the Bullets here last night, and I'm glad to have them here.

I enjoyed last season immensely. I enjoyed watching the Rockets win. It was the first-ever major championship in sports for a Houston team. It opened the season with 15 straight wins, tying an NBA record. And the victories, the number of victories they had, was the best in the team's history. So it was a great season for them. And you all know, I kind of liked basketball last year anyway. And I'm beginning to like it better this year as it goes along.

It occurs to me that basketball is a lot like my work around here: You get behind; you get ahead; you never know whether you're going to win until the end of the game. But the most important thing is that you keep playing and doing the best you can and working on the teamwork.

Coach Tomjanovich did a great job in leading the Rockets to victory last year. He's been with the Rockets for 24 years. And I might say that's sort of a rarity in professional athletics today. But it's the kind of loyalty to an organization that I think we need more of all across America in every walk of life.

I was just told that, before I came in here, that Hakeem Olajuwon's name in Arabic translates into "always on top." [Laughter] I would say that even for the NBA's most valuable player and defensive player of the year, it helps to be on top if you're 7-feet tall. And he's really done very, very well.

Let me say in closing, I think all Americans enjoy athletics, and I think it's a very healthy thing. But as I said in my radio address today, the thing I like best about basketball is that it is every play, in every way a team sport. And it requires a team mentality, even with a lot of stars, to win. You can't win without great players, but you can't win without good teamwork either. And that's what our country needs more of. And I'm delighted to have the Houston Rockets here.

I'd like now to ask the NBA Commissioner, David Stern, to come forward and say a few words.

[At this point, Mr. Stern made brief remarks and presented the President with a jacket.]

The President. What do you think this will do for my image, guys? [Laughter] I love this. I love this.

Mr. Stern. It's an extra large, Mr. President. [Laughter]

The President. I need an extra large. That's great. [Laughter]

Mr. Stern. With that, I'd like to introduce the owner of the Houston Rockets, Les Alexander. Les.

The President. Thank you.

Mr. Alexander. Thank you, Mr. President, for having us here today. I'd like to present you with a championship ring with your name on it, and it says, "To the number

one fan in America, from the Houston Rockets."

The President. Thank you so much. That's beautiful. Thank you.

Mr. Alexander. Now I'd like to introduce one of the great coaches in the world, Rudy Tomjanovich, and of course the greatest player in the world, Hakeem Olajuwon.

Mr. Tomjanovich. Thank you, Mr. President, for taking time and making this a very special day for us. It's a day we'll always remember. And I would like to present to you a Rocket jersey with your name on the back and the number one.

The President. That's great.

Mr. Tomjanovich. You're the number one man on the number one team in the world.

The President. You know, I've got a basketball court down here in the backyard. Do you think I should wear this? [Laughter] Good length, too, don't you think? [Laughter]

Mr. Olajuwon. Well, I would just like to thank Mr. President for this an honor for us as a team and also to have this opportunity to visit the White House. And we're so glad you're the President. And thank you so much for inviting us. And we would like to come back next year as the champion—[laughter]

The President. Will you come back next year? Thank you very much.

It's all aired up. I may go down and—

Q. All you need is trunks. [Laughter]

The President. Yes. A shot might help—if I had a shot. [Laughter] I still need a shot.

Thank you very much. It's good to see you. It was great.

Meeting With President Boris Yeltsin of Russia

Q. Mr. President, have you put off a summit with Yeltsin in May?

The President. No. I don't know what the—let me just say this. I don't know what the source of that story is, but I want to make it very clear: We have made no decision about the May schedule. And there are lots of issues involved, because there are lots of 50th anniversary events on celebrating the end of World War II. And we literally have not had a meeting on that. So it would be wrong to draw any inference one way or the

other. There has literally been—I've gotten no recommendations from my staff on it. We've had no meeting. Tony Lake and I had our first passing conversation about it last night about 6 p.m. So we'll make a decision quite soon and announce it, but there has been no decision made.

Q. Well, you wouldn't go, would you, if there's a war on in Chechnya?

The President. I have said, there is no decision made. I have made no decision. I've had no meeting. And when I do, I'll let you know.

Secretary of Commerce Ron Brown

Q. Mr. President, does Ron Brown still have your support?

The President. He's the best Commerce Secretary we've ever had. And he's gotten more results. That ought to be the test. He's a good Commerce Secretary. The questions that have been raised about what happened before he became Commerce Secretary are being looked into in an appropriate fashion. And meanwhile, he's on the job, and I'm supporting him in that.

No Commerce Secretary has ever done more than he has to create jobs for Americans and to support the interest of American business. And that is the test. And he should go forward and do his job. That's what I want him to do.

Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:47 a.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House.

Remarks Commemorating the 50th Anniversary of Iwo Jima in Arlington, Virginia

February 19, 1995

Thank you, ladies and gentlemen. I think we should give Colonel Barber a round of applause for his remarks and for his service. [Applause]

General and Mrs. Mundy, Secretary and Mrs. Brown, honored veterans and families, distinguished guests, my fellow Americans. Today on this wonderfully quiet morning, within sight of so many of our Nation's great monuments and on the edge of our national cemetery, where some of those whom we

honor today are buried, we recall the fury of war and a landmark in our history that is one of both loss and triumph. We gather in the company of heroes, those who served at Iwo Jima. Many of them do rest nearby, but we thank God that many are still here today.

Fifty years ago, with their lives before them, they left everything, their families, their loved ones, the serenity and security of their homes, to fight for a just cause. They departed on a journey to places they had never heard of to confront dangers they could not have imagined. But they never wavered or faltered. And when they were done, our liberties and our homes were safe again.

Last year at Normandy, I was privileged to say something I would like to say again because I think that the rest of us can never say it enough: To all of you who served at Iwo Jima, we are the children of your sacrifice, and we are grateful. On behalf of a grateful nation, I would like to ask all of those here who served at Iwo Jima to stand and be recognized. [Applause]

Today the dimensions of their struggle still stagger us. As we have heard, when they attacked Iwo Jima, the enemy was so deeply dug in as to be invisible and all but impregnable. The carnage on the beaches was almost unimaginable. The sands were black and deep and so soft that one man said it was like walking on coffee grounds. Trying to claim just a few hundred yards, troops were raked by gunfire and pinned down. And as Secretary Brown said, on the first day 2,400 were killed. On hearing of the casualties, President Roosevelt was reported to have gasped with horror for the first time since Pearl Harbor.

Securing Iwo Jima was supposed to take less than 2 weeks, but it took 5. Progress was a yard's advance. But never were the words "issue in doubt", the call for withdrawal, uttered. The 75,000 who went ashore pulled together. Privates rose and took command. In just one case of many, a platoon suffered so many casualties that command passed to 12 different marines. Navy corpsmen saved one life after another, pulling the wounded from battle. The Seabees did their vital construction work under constant fire.